



ARANYA

HYDERABAD BIRDING PALS | FRIENDS OF FLORA & FAUNA



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In this issue

The month of April commenced with the much anticipated 200th bird walk at Ananthagiri hills. One of the guest speakers at the 200th bird walk celebrations, Mr. Shiva Shankar has written a report of it. This bird walk was followed by five more at various places around Hyderabad. Summer has set in and the cover story tells us about its effect on birds and birding in this season. The winter migrants have returned to their roosting states in north India and this period is good for visiting the north-eastern parts of India to observe them. A trip report covers the experience of HBP members' recent visit to Sikkim. Yet another photographer reveals the contents of his camera bag to us in the section 'What's in my camera bag?'. This is followed by the notable sightings and photographer's corner.

Happy Birding
Ajinkya Supekar

Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) is a group of bird watching enthusiasts based out of Hyderabad, united by a common love for birds. We organize free bird walks around the city of Hyderabad that are open to participation by all like-minded individuals. We are an informal group, who are passionate about bird watching and photography, learning about bird behavior (in the field) and doing our bit towards conservation of nature and its habitat as well. Do check our Facebook group to stay up to date on our bird watching events.

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April Bird Walks



200th Bird Walk | Ananthagiri Hills
01th April 2018

201st Bird Walk | Alankrita Resort
07th April 2018



202nd Bird Walk | Mallela Theertham 08th April 2018



203rd Bird Walk | Nallagandla Lake 14th April 2018



204th Bird Walk | Narsapur Forest 22nd April 2018



205th Bird Walk | Himayat Sagar 29th April 2018



Ananthagiri Hills Trip Report

By Shiva Shankar

200th Bird Walk | Ananthagiri Hills
01st April 2018

A bird walk with like-minded friends is always a pleasure. So was the 200th bird walk at Hyderabad!

I was preparing for the pelagic birding off Mangalore coast and I got a call from a good friend, Srinivas M and he mentioned about the 200th bird walk happening at Hyderabad. I was happy to join the team and share my pelagic birding experience. For me, it was a wonderful opportunity to begin birding in the eastern forests. Initially, I had planned to spend three days at Uma Maheshwaram temple, near Srisailam, before the event. Since these were weekdays, I had to cut the trip short to only one day.

I reached Hyderabad at noon. Fareed Mohmed, a HBP member, picked me up from the airport, and we drove directly to Uma Maheshwaram temple. It was about a 2-hour drive and we reached the area by 4 pm. We went up the hill where we saw a Painted Spurfowl (*Galloperdix lunulata*), a lifer for me. We heard the calls of Yellow-throated Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*), another lifer, but we failed to locate them.

It was a special day at the temple and there were a lot of visitors; so the bird activity was less. A good number of sunbirds and red-whiskered bulbuls were actively feeding, and they were not bothered about our presence. We saw a pair of White-eyed Buzzard (*Butastur teesa*) soaring up high in the sky. I was surprised to see the elusive emerald dove in an open area, feeding near a garbage dump. They are used to the human activity near the temple, I presume.

After a light dinner, we started looking for owls. We kept an open eye while we drove up the hill, looking for the Yellow-legged Buttonquail, which were earlier sighted feeding on the roadside. There were earlier reports of Spot bellied Eagle Owl, Mottled wood Owl, Oriental scops Owl, Indian Scops Owl, Brown Hawk Owl and Indian Eagle Owl from that hill. It was the first time ever, that I spent an entire night looking for owls. We went up and down the hill and also visited the nearby forest check post for owls. The only owl we got to see that night was the Indian Scops Owl (*Otus bakkamoena*), spotted by Manjula Desai. We saw two of them near a step-well. We heard calls of three Jerdon's Nightjars (*Caprimulgus atripennis*), very close to the temple. We left early in the morning to Hyderabad, looking forward to get ready for the big event, organised at a nice hotel.

This event was organized by the members of Hyderabad birding pals, in collaboration with the forest department of the state of Telangana.

A very well-organized event with talks by birding Gurus, Aasheesh Pittie, Kanwar B Singh and Biswarup Raha. It was an honor to share the stage with them and present my pelagic birding experience. Rohan Chakravarty, an eminent cartoonist and birder, added some lightness to the event. The success of the event was an example of the the team effort and good coordination among the core team members. It was an eventful evening with many cultural performances in between.

I went back to my room to get a good sleep before we headed next day to the actual 200th bird walk.

I was ready by 5 am and got picked by Mr Sriram Reddy and we headed to Ananthagiri hills. A team of about twenty members were present that day. At around 8 am, we went down the hill and split into smaller groups to explore the area. It is a fairly dense forest with vast grasslands extending next to it.

The morning birding yielded me a lifer, a Savanna Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*) and I had a good view of the Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*). We also spotted a Jerdon's Nightjar in roost and a few Orange-headed Thrushes. We concluded the birding just before noon and I headed back to the hotel.

I would cherish this trip for a long time! My thanks to the members of HBP for making this a memorable trip and I am looking forward to making many more visits to this region.

eBird Checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44150018>



Jerdon's Nightjar (*Caprimulgus atripennis*)
By Balakrishna Marar



Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*)
By Sourav Kumar Das

Savanna Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*)
By Shiva Shankar



Alankrita Resort Trip Report

By Soumyajit Basu

201st Bird Walk | Alankrita Resort
07st April 2018

This was one of the locations that hadn't really been explored as part of a formal birdwalk, though most of us were familiar with the place, being a resort where we have visited many a time at leisure. A special thanks to DGP Tejdeep Kaur Menon for getting us bird lovers to meet for breakfast with her at Alankrita resorts and to see what was in store at this beautiful place.

It was a nice day as we started our journey a little early as the location is out of city limits. It was a cloudy day though not completely overcast, and the ride was pleasant as we made our journey on a two wheeler. All of us met up near the gate by 6-30am and then we all headed inside to see what the day had in store for us.

The plan was to complete birding as soon as possible before the people staying in the resort woke up and the bird activity would go down. We divided ourselves into three small groups and headed towards different directions inside the resort.

The 1st sighting for two of our groups was a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher hopping around us. Followed by the Tickell's was a Ashy Prinia and Yellow eyed babbler. As we turned a corner there was a Red vented Bulbul with a fat juicy catch.

We headed back to a small pool hoping to see some more action but there was only a laughing Dove that seemingly laughed at us while perched on top of a Buddha statue (almost as if asking us to "Stay Calm")

We waited for some time and then started moving back to the resort. To our surprise this place had more action now, and we saw Sunbirds hopping from one flower to another sucking nectar on the beautiful flowers around this place.

Some of our other team members spotted the Pale billed flowerpecker, Thick Billed Flowerpecker, and Dusky Crag Martins. We also observed flocks of Black Headed Ibis, Rose ringed Parakeets, Cormorants and Painted Storks who flew by. Soon we were all feeling hungry and waited for Tejdeep ma'am to finish her work so that we could join in for a team breakfast. As we waited it seemed the Tickell's blue Flycatcher (another one) seemed more friendly and started hopping around us on the soft wet grass on which we all were relaxing. None of us wanted to miss this opportunity of the beauty in the open grass and in beautiful light and shutters could be heard clicking by almost all of us present there.

In a while Tejdeep ma'am arrived and we headed for breakfast where we had discussions on the recently concluded event commemorating HBP's 200th bird walk, and plans for the future. The morning ended shortly after breakfast with full stomachs and happy smiles and a few nice clicks though with not too many species to observe.



Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*)
By Somyajit Basu

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*)
By Somyajit Basu



Mallela Theertham Trip Report

By Manjula Desai

202th Bird Walk | Mallela Theertham
08th April 2018

Mallela Theertham (Translates to 'cascading jasmine flowers'), a beautiful little hidden waterfall in a relatively dense area of the Nallamalla forest range, Nagarkurnool, Telangana. This was the first bird walk planned for this region, so a lot of expectations were in place! Several rare birds were expected to be found and a good number of participants were in attendance and in anticipation!

About 19 birders in total, formed carpools in five vehicles to reach the place, which is about 180 km away from the city of Hyderabad.

Our vehicle, driven by Sriram Reddy consisted of Gopalkrishna Iyer, Ashis Kumar Pradhan, Naveen Sama and myself, left a little earlier than planned to reach the place sooner, to see some nocturnal activity in the vicinity. When we reached the place at around 4:00 a.m., we saw a Wolf Snake slithering on the road, as observed by Gopal and we stopped to observe its movements for some time. We could notice the area bustling with a lot of calls from Jerdon's Nightjars (*Caprimulgus atripennis*) and a few owls like Jungle Owlet (*Glaucidium radiatum*) and Indian Scops Owls (*Otus bakkamoena*).





Green Imperial-Pigeon (*Ducula aenea*)
By Fareed Mohmed

By 6.30 a.m., we caught up with other teams at a small outlet for breakfast and tea and a little chit-chat near Munnar check post, before we drove towards the intended bird walk area.

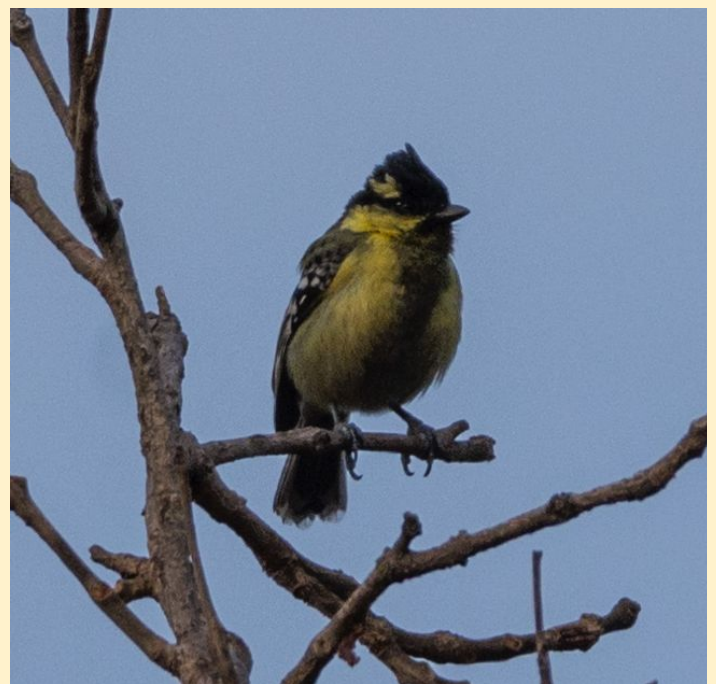
On the way to the waterfalls, we stopped at several places to spot Green Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula aenea*), Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*), Plum-headed Parakeets (*Psittacula cyanocephala*), Indian Peafowls (*Pavo cristatus*), Grey jungle fowls (*Gallus sonneratii*), Alexandrine Parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*), Black-shouldered kites (*Elanus axillaris*), several black drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), Indian Golden Orioles (*Oriolus kundoo*) etc.



Brown-cheeked Fulvetta (*Alcippe poioicephala*)
By Fareed Mohmed

At one particular spot, we found a few Cinereous tits (*Parus cinereus*) and Indian black-lored tits (*Machlolophus aplonotus*), which were in close proximity to photograph. We spent a few minutes admiring their beauty through binoculars as well.

At another spot, we found orange-headed thrush (*Geokichla citrina*) calling loudly, perching on a relatively high branch! It was my first time to hear the bird call so loudly and so out in the open! We pulled over to the side and clicked a few pictures before heading to our destination.



Indian Tit (*Machlolophus aplonotus*)
By Fareed Mohmed

At the parking area outside of Mallela Theertham, all teams assembled at around 9:45 a.m., for a group picture. Paid for the entrance (20 rupees pp) and headed towards the waterfall. The waterfall is located in a valley, with approximately 350 steps leading to it. A restoration work is in progress to improve the condition of the worn-out steps. It is a popular tourist destination among the locals and the surrounding areas of Srisailem. It is a little cooler down there, with Krishna river streaming through the forest, keeping it green albeit a little humid.

Be warned, one should be armed with heavy-duty mosquito-repellents, else you will end up with nasty bites all over, which most of us did! It can be quite an annoyance and hindrance which one doesn't want while observing birds quietly and focusing intently to get good pictures!

Our group of five split up into individuals and went in search of birds on their own after entering the forest. I went across the stream and chose an open area, close to the stream to get a clear view of the activities. I saw several Tickell's blue flycatchers (*Cyornis tickelliae*), Black-naped Monarchs (*Hypothymis azurea*), Puff-throated babblers (*Pellorneum ruficeps*), Indian paradise flycatchers (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) and so on.



Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*)
By Fareed Mohmed

After spending some time there, I headed downstream to find Gopal and Sriram and we decided to trek some smaller waterfalls (there are about seven of them) following the mainstream. Our youngest member, Chetan Sai showed interest in joining us and the four of us followed the path leading down. Gopal took a separate path, while the three of us followed another. It took us about 35 minutes to cross them all (with some difficulty and acrobatic skills)

and reach the final one, which was down in a ditch. We decided to rest there a bit, as the day was turning out to be pretty hot and we were drenching in our own pools of sweat! While we sat there, we saw a pair of Crested-hawk eagles in a courtship display! We took turns and observed them through the binoculars and admired their movements up and down the sky! After snacking briefly, we trekked back to the top at around 13:30 p.m.

On the way, Gopal spotted a couple of rat snakes and also what seemed like a checkered keelback or Asiatic water snake (*Xenochrophis piscator*). We rested briefly at the entrance, waiting for other team members and headed for lunch and dispersed thereafter. A total of 94 species were reported.

Here's the eBird checklist:
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44389674>



Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*)
By RK Balaji



Golden-fronted Leafbird (*Chloropsis aurifrons*)
By Fareed Mohmed

Nallagandla Lake Trip Report

By Soumyajit Basu

203rd Bird Walk and Clean-up
Nallagandla Lake | 04th April 2018

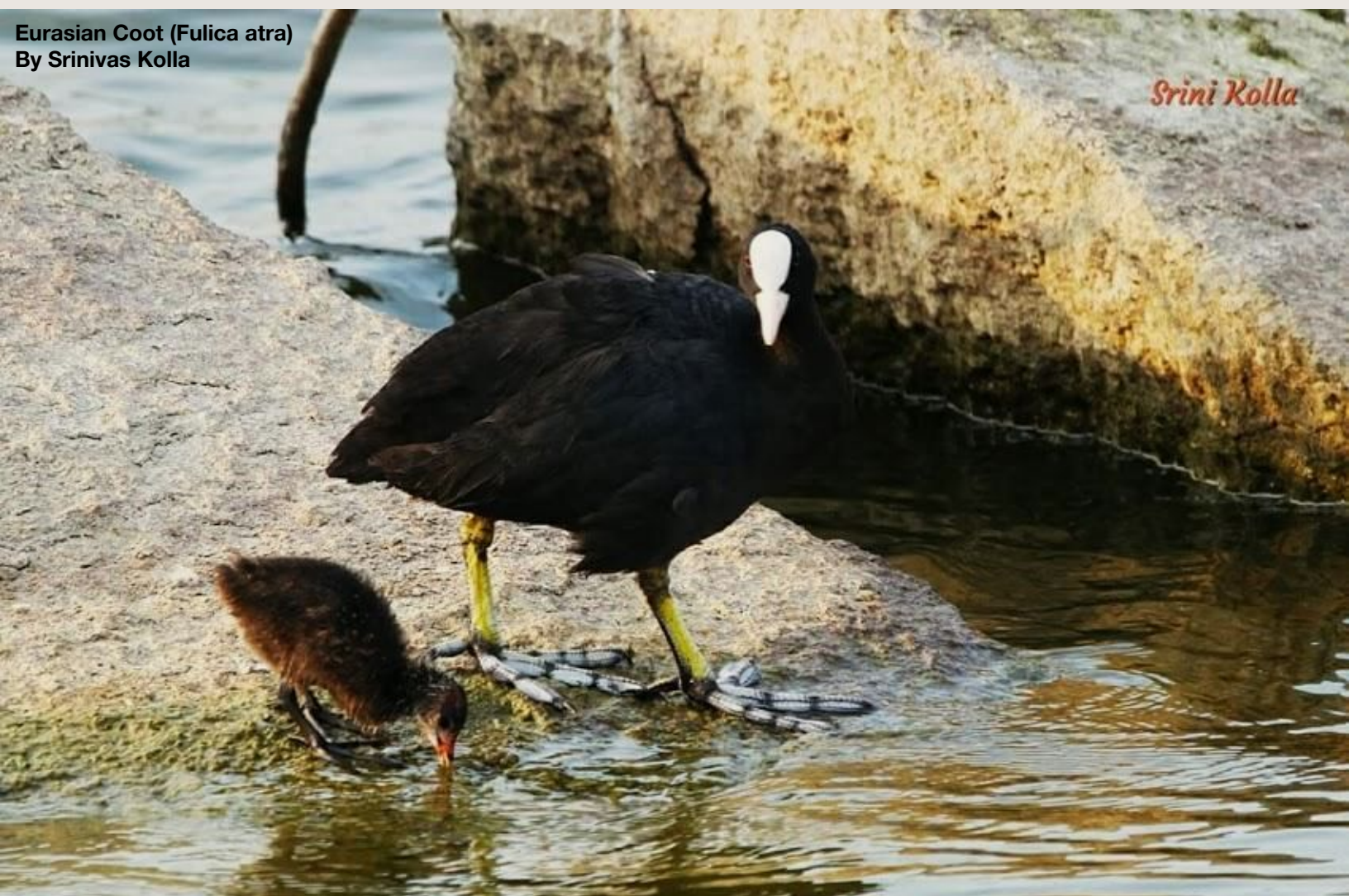
On the 14th of April, a clean-up drive was planned at an unexplored area of Nallagandla lake by the members of HBP.

We (Soumyajit Basu, Srinivas Kolla, Raju Mantena, KV Rama Raju and his daughter) reached the spot at around 6:20 a.m. After being greeted by Manik Dutta, Tirthankar Baidya and Amit Singh and discussing the clean-up activities and meeting the SPF, who was already present at the venue and the society people who were figuring out ways to start the activity, we went ahead towards the lake to record the bird activities.

As we started, we saw common coots and black-winged stilts, sitting on the edge of a rocks. There were a few rock-pigeons as well. As there wasn't any noticeable activity near the buildings, we moved towards the sides of the lake through the bushes, led by Amit Singh. We noticed a peahen, as it jumped over the wall which borders with HCU.

As we walked along the shores, waders were visible: Wood sandpipers, lesser sand plovers, little stints, green sandpipers, common greenshank and a couple of green and northern shovelers were active.

Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*)
By Srinivas Kolla



Srini Kolla

We waited for some time for pelicans, as there were sighted in the recent past, but we couldn't sight any, because of the clean-up activity. We moved about two km away from the crowd and sighted paradise flycatchers, Indian roller, White-throated Kingfisher, Shikra in flight, Indian thick-knee, black-shouldered kites, many peacocks, pied bush chats, red-vented bulbuls, paddy field pipits, common ioras and Ashy-crowned sparrow larks.

With the sun rising up and temperatures soaring high, we called it a day and headed back to the auditorium, where a meet, followed by a small breakfast was arranged by the residents.

The day ended with a cleaner and safer lake for birds with the help of Manik, Tirtha, Amit, SPF and the environment-conscious people of the communities surrounding Nallagandla lake.

We look forward to seeing more activities near the lake in the future.

eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45342634>



Indian Thick-knee (*Burhinus indicus*)
By Amit Singh



Narsapur Forest Trip Report

By Fareed Mohmed

204rd Bird Walk at Narsapur Forest
22nd April 2018

On Sunday 22 Apr 2018 Hyderabad Birding Pals conducted their weekly bird walk at Narsapur Reserve Forest in Medak, Telangana. This place is around 45 km from Hyderabad and ranks 6th in the top birding hotspots of Telangana. A total of 236 bird species have been reported from this location till date. We met at the Air force station in Dundigal at around 6:15 am before reaching the destination. A little over 20 birding pals attended the walk that day.

All the migrant species were expected to be gone by this time of year, and the resident ones would be busy preparing for a new phase of their life, ones involving courtship displays in their breeding plumage since it was summer. Soon after parking our vehicles besides a small temple on the left hand side of the road, we assembled for a group photo.



Common lora (*Aegithina tiphia*) in Breeding Plumage By Fareed Mohmed



Malabar Whistling-Thrush (*Myophonus horsfieldii*)
By Srinivas Kolla

The activity around us seemed promising, with fair number of Rose-ringed and Plum-headed parakeets, Common loras, Grey Hornbills, Oriental White eyes, Coppersmith Barbets, Small Minivets, and Black Drongos seen and heard around us.

After the group photograph we all split into multiple small groups and took different walking trails leading towards the lake. We seemed to be surrounded by a number of Common lora in breeding plumage. I have never encountered as many as ten lora on any birding trip before.

A little ahead on our walk we heard the "Whistling Schoolboy" a.k.a the Malabar Whistling thrush. A challenging bird to photograph when hiding under the clutter of shrubs he gave us a good challenge, however by the end of walk almost everyone had decent images to show of this beauty.

A little further down along the stream we team sighted Laughing Doves, Eurasian collared Dove, Spotted Dove, a Blue faced Malkoha and Red collared Dove.



Red Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)
By Bhaarat Vyas

This place is also known for many snakes and we were not surprised to see Rat snake, Green vine snake and an unidentified snake skin well over 6 feet long along the trail. By the time we reached the lake we had observed around 70-80 species already. At the lake we observed common resident water birds such as Grey Heron, Purple heron, Spot billed duck, Lesser whistling duck, Cotton pygmy-Goose, Oriental Darter and a few other winter migrants who were still here like the Garganey and Gadwall. We also spotted about 5 Greater painted snipes at the lake.

By around 9:30 am we decided to return back from lake since the sun was getting very hot. By the time we reached the parking lot most of us were exhausted and tired.

We would like to Thank Ameer Vyas Ji for bringing delicious snacks and fruit juice for all the attendees (I wish I had clicked a photo of the treat but, was super hungry and all the food around made me forget everything else). Thank you Vyas family and Kalyan Ineni, this walk will be remembered not for the whistling thrush or Snipes or Iora but for the great food you guys brought and the companionship of the Hyderabad Birding Pals.

At the end of trip we had observed 117 species. This is a good number considering it was summer and very few migrants were spotted. A big Thank you to all the attendees who made this walk a big success.

eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S44823788>



Blyth's Pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*)
By Bhaarat Vyas



White-browed Wagtail (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*)
By Fareed Mohmed

Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)
By Fareed Mohmed





Fareed Mohmed

Lesser Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*)
By Fareed Mohmed



Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)
By Jagdish Chandra



Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*)
By Jagdish Chandra

Himayat Sagar Trip Report

By Vyom Vyas

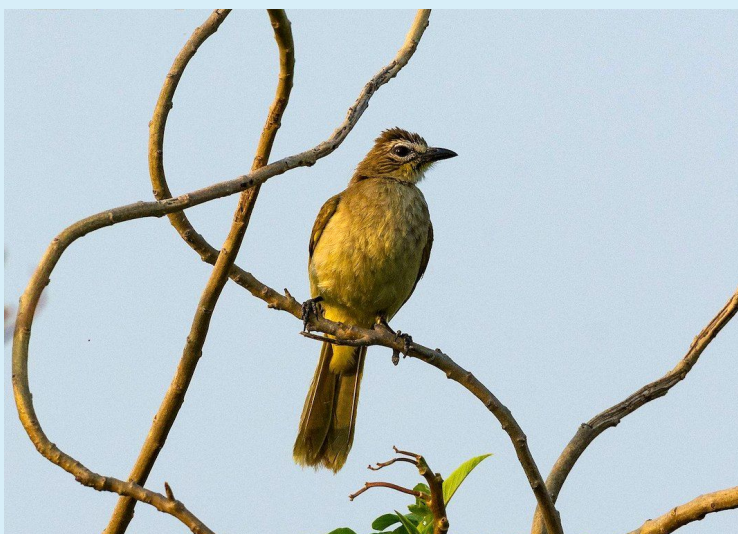
205th Bird Walk at Himayat Sagar
29th April 2018

Greetings to all respected members of HBP!

Firstly, I would like to thank Kalyan uncle for giving me this opportunity to write a trip report for Aranya. It is a great honour for me to be a part of the “Best birding group of our country”.

On Sunday, 29th April 2018, HBP conducted the 205th bird walk at Himayat Sagar Lake. A total of 13 members participated.

We gathered at a tea stall on Vikarabad road at around 6:00 a.m. We had tea there and waited for all the members to arrive. Once everyone was present, we started towards Himayat Sagar. We reached our destination at 6:15 a.m. When we arrived, the first calls we heard were of Gray francolin. After some time, we took a group picture and started to walk towards the lake. Soon, one of the members spotted a Spotted Owlet pair perching on a tree, which was a morning delight for all of us.



White-browed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus luteolus*)
By Subrata Kool



White-browed Wagtail (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*)
By Subrata Kool

After spotting owlets we continued to walk ahead, we saw many little stints, black-winged stilts, grey heron, purple herons etc. I was lucky enough along with Balakrishna Marar uncle to spot black-tailed godwits. We were all very delighted to see the birds in their breeding plumage. After walking further towards the lake, we split into small groups and each group went exploring in different directions. Our group went into the fields, which were located on the opposite of the lake.

The other teams which were present near the lake were watching the shorebirds, while we were watching a lot of silverbills, Scaly-breasted munias, Plain prinias, Ashy-crowned sparrow larks and pipits.

Following the old paths, the group kept walking ahead, but I stopped because I spotted a few large-grey babblers, which were new to me, so I stopped to click their pictures. I joined the group soon after.

At almost 7:00 a.m., the sun was scorching and the temperature was soaring high, we continued to bird till we reached the end of the lake. After the heat became unbearable, we decided to return to the starting point.

Smita Didi, along with me were way behind the rest of the group, but we saw almost 40-50 Baya and Black-breasted weavers, two White-Browed wagtails and many sandpipers. After some time, we saw the group sitting under the shade of a tree, watching weavers and munias having a bath.

At 9:40 a.m., most of the members started to leave, but Raju uncle along with me, were waiting for my father to return, as he got away from the group while exploring. He returned after some time, looking very tired, but also happy, as he spotted many gulls and terns together.

The bird walk at Himayat Sagar turned out to be a very great one and a total of 80 species were spotted by the members. Overall, it was a fantastic walk.

eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45141551>



Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*)
By Anil Kumar

**Indian Silverbill (*Euodice malabarica*) and
Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*)**
By Subrata Kool



A Deccan Summer

The Blinding Light and the Burning Heat



By Ashwin Arun Yadav from
Wikimedia Commons

By Gopalkrishna Iyer

The Deccan plateau experiences a vast degree of temperature fluctuations ranging from 45 degrees Celsius in summer to freezing in winter. The rains are less as well as seasonal in this region, unlike the coastal regions. The elevation of the plateau is over 2000 feet above sea level and the interior low, humid nature of the atmosphere which squeezes out the last bit of water from anything exposed are primarily the reasons for the scanty rainfall experienced. With the rise in average global temperatures, the once lush green tropical forests, centuries ago, have slowly converted themselves into the deciduous or thorny scrub jungle with advancing time. Thanks to humans for the acceleration of this phenomenon. Now, only the borders of the plateau are all that remains as tropical forest and that too is under the threat of population expansion of humans. These change the central Indian plateau region and further amplify the extremes of weather, making it more hostile. The wildlife and bird diversity and numbers in the region have slowly dwindled, with some of them vanishing with this arid climate in place.

Several birds have evolved to migrate with the changes in temperature, but there are several species which have adapted to the city life as well to the summer heat of central India. The black kites very successfully took it to feed on the rats and mice in the cities, and so do the intelligent crows on the food waste. Making pigeons the symbol of love, humans have ensured their survival in the cities too; nevertheless, they have adapted well too. The pipits and the lapwings live in the vast expanse of scrub or agricultural land adjacent to the available water bodies. The remaining of the eagles and vultures keep hovering in search of any animals that might have succumbed to heat stress in the region. With the ever-expanding city limits, development and the ever-increasing temperatures, the pressure on our natural water resources has been alarmingly high. Both birds and animals are finding it difficult to look for water to drink and shade to shield from the direct heat for their survival in the extremes. In this article, we intend to discuss the adaptations evolved to withstand the summer heat as well as what little we can do to help their survival.

Birds in summer:

The Central Indian Deccan Plateau region, which is bordered by the western ghats on the west peninsula, eastern ghats in the east peninsula and the Vindhyas and Satpuras in the north enclose a 2 million square kilometres area which gets to fuming air temperatures of over 45 degrees Celsius and ground temperatures of 75 degrees Celsius during the peak summer. Most water sources run dry and the food also becomes scarce ramping up the hostile levels of survival. The dry scrub or trees lose their leaves, the grasses run dry and the slightest of the spark turns into a forest fire to further heat up the area. The migratory birds leave, looking for cooler places. Many of the birds perish in this struggle. To name a few of those who stay adapting to these extremes are the sunbirds, drongos, kites, egrets, mynas etc.

Birds are homeothermic and maintain an average constant body temperature of 40 degrees Celsius (105 degrees Fahrenheit). The higher temperature is attributed to the energy-intensive ability to fly which generates a higher amount of heat and evolutionary adaptation. This expenditure is to be met by the constant supply of food and water which gives the required energy for efficient flight. The optimum body temperature has to be maintained by all homeothermic animals and birds for the maximum energy production from the food consumed. Along with the energy produced, the excess heat generated has also to be dissipated. Birds have evolved not to have sweat glands. Thus, the thermoregulatory process is quite complex and requires efficient heat dissipating systems.

The process of thermoregulation seen in most of the non-passerine birds is the rapid flapping of their upper throat and

the lower floor of the mouth which is called as “gular flutter”. In this process, moisture from the mucous membranes evaporates to produce a cooling effect. This is similar to panting in dogs. Though the passerines do not have the ability to dissipate heat by gular flutter, there were no significant differences in the temperature regulation between the members of the two families (Rezende et al 2002, J Exp Biol). Certain birds like owls are seen to flap their wings gently to blow air to the moist face and mouth to produce evaporative cooling.

Unfeathered/uninsulated surfaces also provide a good site for heat radiation. Some of the birds like the black vultures are known to excrete on to their legs to accelerate the cooling effect. Birds excrete the white coloured uric acid instead of urine for maximum conservation of water. The evaporative cooling of the remaining water, as well as a layer of protection over the legs, helps to keep the bird cool from the direct effect of the sunrays. The unfeathered scaly legs of the birds are also fed by several blood vessels which act as radiators when they dilate to release the excess heat. Several birds stand in water for long hours even during the day as heat can be absorbed better by the water from through the legs. When the legs are not moist the heat radiation through the leg veins are only effective if the temperature outside is below the body temperature.



House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)
By Sundareswaran Vetaikorumagan

When it becomes too sunny, birds are also seen to tuck away their heads under their feathers to escape the direct light from the sun during the peak sun hours. Several duck species and flamingos are found to exhibit this kind of behaviour. A few birds among the group will guard the whole flock looking for any incoming danger, and they take turns to perform the guarding duty.

Behavioural thermoregulation is exhibited by a few gull species as they nest in the open ground. Subtle changes in the orientation towards sun can alter the heat gain or loss.

The primary adaptation to the daytime high temperatures is just to keep out of action during those hours. Several birds have adopted a crepuscular or nocturnal habit just to keep away from the blazing heat.

Majority of the birds of the Deccan plateau are active only during the morning and evening hours. During winter, these birds may be seen active in the noon hours too, suggesting that the ambient temperatures are responsible for their timings of activity. This regional and climatic adaptation aids in a better utilization of resources during the happy hours and conservation of energy during the odd hours.

Birds also look for cooler microclimates to perch when the temperature gets hot beyond their comfort zone. Places like the cooler phase of a cliff for a falcon, a deep crevice in between the rocks for bats and owls provide ideal places where the temperatures are substantially different from the temperature outside. Of course, when such places are limited, there will be a competition and the stronger ones get to enjoy the most.



Birdwatching during summer:

The summer heat affects the humans even more than the birds. The invention of air conditioners has given us a great degree of freedom to regulate the climate indoors, but the big hot world outside is just a footstep away. During summer days humans lose over ten litres of water along with a lot of salts if exposed to the atmosphere. Electrolyte replenishment and ad libitum water intake are extremely essential for a person out in the harsh weather. Travelling to a remote location for birdwatching should not be at the cost of one's health. In the meantime, there are several ways in which we can invite them to our desired place safely. The following points will not only bring birds to you but also support a great deal for their survival.

- Provide a constant supply of clean water at an elevated place
- A simple eco-friendly feeder with a variety of grains
- Growing naturally inhabiting plants in the garden
- Providing shady areas with climbers and other plants
- Keeping pet cats and dogs away from catching birds
- Avoid trimming of plants during summers
- Avoid using reflective building material which blinds the bird in flight
- Taking any dehydrated/sick bird to a nearby vet.

Bird watching during summer is not necessarily an occasion to get up early in the day, going for a hundred-mile drive to a forest or a sanctuary, follow a specified trail, spot, identify and fill up the species list to a century in a couple of hours in your birding pocket notebook regardless of the weather. However, seeing rare species does bring in a lot of energy and enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, watching the common ones in the vicinity is equally important, especially when the weather is unfavourable.

With the advent of technology, humans have so far made adjustments to the microclimate for the enhancement of comfort even while travelling. The birds and animals, however, have fought their way out till now, enduring the extremes and will still be fighting the same way to ensure their survival.

Let's support them in whatever little means we can.



Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*)
By Ramesh Kumar Choudhary



Bird Watching in the North East Jungles of India

By Karthik Enumulla

On one of the trips to Sattal, a wonderful birding destination in Uttarakhand, Northern India, my friends had asked the well-known guide, Hari Lama, to plan a trip to the North East hotpots for a birding trip. It was decided in Dec'17 that an 8 day trip to Latpanchar, Zuluk and Lava was on for 21st Of Apr'18 . It was the best season to go and capture some of the most elusive and exotic species, including the most popular Rufous-necked hornbill, amongst the other attractions.

The group consisted of 6 people, Husein, Kumar Kanchu, Sriram, Naresh, Naveen Sama and Karthik. Tickets were booked well in advance given the peak season travel demands and the trip was eagerly awaited for.

The itinerary was to land in Bagdogra on 21st April, and head to Latpanchar first for 3 nights. The primary focus was to capture the Rufous necked Hornbill at Latpanchar first, since it was the nesting season. And then go after the other popular birds like the Red-headed trogon, Long-tailed Broadbill, Mountain imperial pigeon, Green-billed Malkoha, Black Baza and Hill Myna.

Latpanchar is located at an altitude of 4200 feet above sea level. But despite the rest of the country caught in the midst of the hot Indian summer, Latpanchar was very cool day temperatures hovering around 21-15 C, and the nights at 12-14 C. We visited Rongtong where we spotted the Black Baza, Green billed Malkoha, Crested Bulbul, Hill Mynas and several other birds. On the last morning we spent a couple of hours in the village itself and spotted the White-browed scimitar babbler, Rufous-necked laughingthrush, Black-winged cuckooshrike.

Zuluk was the next place we headed to which is located at a height of 10250 feet above sea level. We were warned that it was going to be extremely cold given the altitude. We weren't disappointed, and Zuluk had temperatures close to freezing all through the day and night. We were keen to capture the elusive Blood Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Fire-tailed Sunbird, various Parrotbills, laughing thrushes and several other species endemic to the higher altitudes. While we captured close to 100

different species of birds, the Blood Pheasant and the Satyr Tragopan proved to be elusive. The Pangolakha sanctuary which covers the entire region is also home to the Red Panda, which also is a very elusive and difficult capture. We got close to an altitude of 13000 feet in search of the blood pheasant. Visiting Zuluk all-round the year requires one to have thermals in their clothing kit, since it is always extremely cold.

Lava was our last leg of the trip where we had nights and were keen to capture the Grosbeak, several types of Finches, Striated Bulbul, various flycatchers, amongst several other popular species. It is located at an altitude of over 7000 feet above sea level. We were staying in the city and had to travel to the core areas by car first and then trek. A couple of places were in the vicinity of the town and were good to spend time there, where we spotted the gold naped finch, several laughing thrushes, Fulvettas, Turtle Doves etc.

What went well: The entire experience of the trip to the region was outstanding, since most of us got to see some extremely rare birds endemic to the region, as well as the landscape and scenery which took our breath away. While the food at Latpanchar was good, the food at Zuluk was outstanding. The hosts were very nice and accommodative. The homestay is also located very close to several birding hotspots and several birds also visit the homestay surroundings. We ended up spotting probably close to 150+ birds.

What was not great: The accommodation at Lava was not good at all. The entire hospitality of the place was very poor. There was no hot water availability as the geysers weren't working. The food in the hotel was very bad, and we went out to eat despite having paid for the food within the package. We weren't aware that room heaters and geysers were available

What was ugly: Hari Lama hadn't mentioned that there would be leeches at Latpanchar and Lava. Now this was a major miss from him and perhaps us as well, since we ought to have probably researched a little more. Lava was pretty bad and most of the people had been bitten by the leeches, since we were underprepared. It is important to have leech socks as a part of the kit, since areas such as these will be infested with leeches. Even gum boots are a good option which will also protect one from snake bites. A lot of time is lost watching out for leeches, given the unpreparedness.

Learnings:

1. The birds in these regions are very elusive and wary to come out in the open, which makes birding fairly tough.
2. The weather can be extremely unpredictable, and can change from a serene blue sky to extremely cloudy in a matter of minutes.
3. When visiting Lava, it is a better option to stay at Rishab valley than in town, since the valley is in the forest and birders have a free access to step out shooting all day.
4. The guides play a highly critical role, and a good guide like Sandeep or Hari Lama are a must.

The North-eastern region of India has always been on my list of favourite birding destinations, which every birder has to visit at least once in their lifetime. This trip was our first and each of us got an opportunity to add a minimum of fifty birds to their life list.



Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*
By Sriram Reddy



Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*
By Sriram Reddy



White-browed Fulvetta *Fulvetta vinipectus*
By Karthik Enumulla



Fire-tailed Myzornis *Myzornis pyrrhura*
By Naresh Vadrevu



Fulvous Parrotbill *Paradoxornis fulvifrons*
By Naresh Vadrevu



Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*
By Sriram Reddy

Husein Latif



Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*
By Husein Latif



Bar-throated Minla *Minla strigula*
By Karthik Enumulla



Naveen Sama Photography

Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium*
By Naveen Sama



Black-faced Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron affine*
By Sriram Reddy

SRIRAM



Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*
By Sriram Reddy

SRIRAM



Black-eared shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis*
By Husein Latif

Husein Latif



Mrs. Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*
By Naveen Sama



Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*
By Naveen Sama

Below are the e-bird checklists of our trip:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45025425>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45013998>

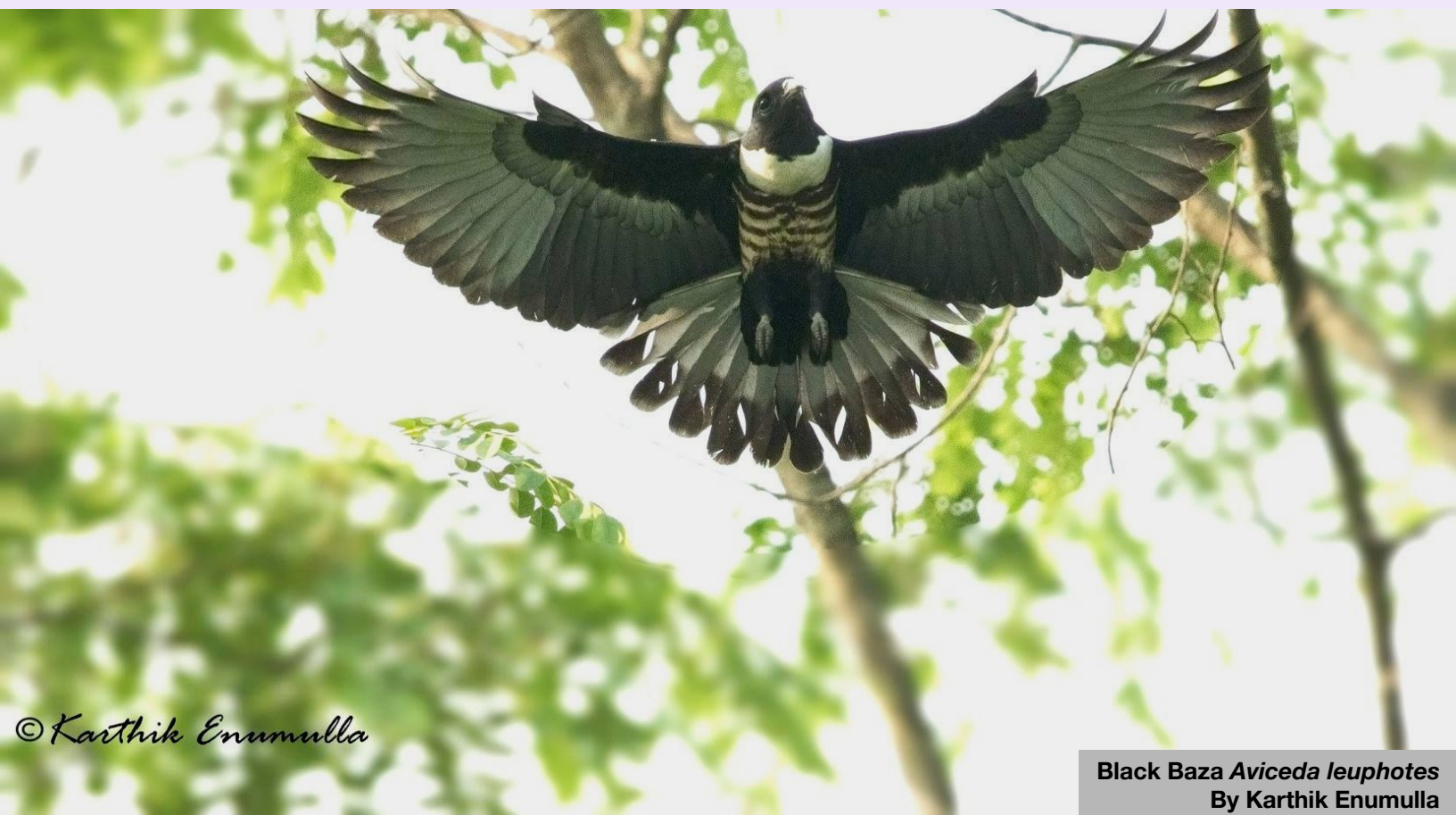
<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45025948>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45024404>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45028624>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45052117>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S45014005>



© Karthik Enumulla

Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*
By Karthik Enumulla



Spotted Laughingthrush *Ianthocincla ocellata*
By Naresh Vadrevu

What's in My Camera Bag?

Husein Latif



Greetings!

I'm Husein Latif, an avid photographer based out of Hyderabad. While the genres of bird and wildlife photography are the closest to my heart, I equally enjoy photographing across genres such as architecture, people and landscapes as well. Commercially I've worked on an interesting mix of product photography, commercial spaces, interiors and architecture and child photography too.

I'm a die-hard Canon user though my first DSLR camera was a Nikon D90, coupled with a Tamron 70-300mm with which I began my journey into bird and animal photography. I made a conscious move to Canon, as I found it more intuitive and quicker to use on the fly. Canon seemed to offer me a single Q function screen where I could make all the adjustments I needed without going into multiple menus that confused my limited capabilities profusely. I was being tutored to shoot in Manual mode by a dear friend Kartik Giri and seemed to always find myself fumbling at crucial moments trying to change my settings. Kartik was a Canon user and would show me the setting screens on his camera therefore my learning curve on the Canon was easier. I was lucky that my learning curve was at a very early stage when I shifted manufacturers to Canon from Nikon. Thankfully I hadn't invested in much other Nikon equipment back then.

All said and done at the end of the day, I also believe that it's not only the brand of equipment that one uses, it also boils down to the creativity, ability to adapt and understand (fast changing situations -light and location) and the basic logical knowledge of the person standing behind the viewfinder that makes a frame or an image, this coupled with a sense of visualization that needs to happen before you even click that shutter.

Camera body

As my genres of photography vary and aren't limited only to requiring a fast fps and a crop sensor for birding only, the choice of body came down to the then recently launched 6d and the 5d mark III. I was aware of the pros and cons of the crop versus full frame sensors and having experienced the frustration of limited ISO and noise capabilities I knew I wanted a full frame body. I invested in a Canon EOS 5d mark III, the only justification I had for paying for a professional full frame body was to keep my learning curve challenged at all times. I've seen many a photographer skimping on cost and settling for a lower priced body only to find that they complete the learning curve with that body in a very short time, the cost of then upgrading amounts to buying two bodies within a fairly short time.



Canon EOS 5d mark III

The Canon 5d mark III boasted of a new 61-point AF system with 41 cross-type AF points and 5 dual cross-type points, High-density Reticular AF, and EOS iTR (Intelligent Tracking and Recognition) versus 9 AF points + 6 Assist Points on the 5D Mark II. The Mark III's autofocus system was inherited from the then recently announced EOS-1D X, and marks the first time since the EOS-3 film SLR that Canon has put its top-of-the-line autofocus system in a non-1-series body. Buying the 5d mark III is a decision I will never regret. Overall, I am very impressed by the Canon 5D Mark III. It is a very capable camera that can deliver outstanding results, The noise capabilities, dynamic range, low-light performance, camera build, ergonomics, AF system, ease of use and speed make it an all round camera that delivers in any situation.

Lenses

Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM

This was my first L series telephoto zoom lens and I used it for almost 5 years while honing my bird and wildlife photography skills. It has an excellent focal length range that includes the longest focal length found in a Canon zoom lens - 400mm. This long focal length and focal length range combined with very good image and build quality make the 100-400 L one of the most popular serious wildlife and sports lenses.



The push/pull zoom mechanism is possibly the most noticeable physical feature of this lens. While it works smoothly, it took me some time to get used to it. A big benefit to the push/pull design is that your supporting hand remains centered under the lens at all times. The 100-400mm focal length range makes it an excellent landscape lens. The wide zoom range on the 100-400 allows widely varied captures of a single scene. For portraits too the 100-400 works well, the longer focal lengths provided by this lens make it good for medium-to-very-tight portraits. With this lens, it is easy to capture candid shots of people from longer distances. Overall an excellent lens to learn and hone your skills on before one upgrades ones lens.

Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS II USM

I recently acquired this lens and use it mainly for my birding and wildlife photography. A fully professional telephoto lens, aimed predominantly at sports and wildlife photographers, the Mark II edition of the EF 300 f/2.8L is certainly no lightweight, at 2.4kg.



As one of Canon's top-notch professional lenses, the EF 300mm f/2.8L IS II USM has just about every feature you could wish for. Ring-type USM autofocus is of the highest standard, and comes complete with Power Focus mode and a Focus Preset facility, it performs superbly with extenders whilst maintaining AF and IS. On a full-frame DSLR camera the fast maximum aperture not only enables you to freeze the action even under gloomy lighting, it also enables a really tight depth of field.

Canon Extender 1.4x III and Canon Extender EF 2X III

The obvious benefit of using an extender or TC on your camera is that it extends the effective focal length of whatever lens you use it with. Though there is a marginal drop in AF performance, focus speed and at times in image quality depending on the light when using extenders, the fact that I am using it with a tack sharp lens does not make the difference very noticeable and makes the tradeoff worth it for me and I use them extensively with my Canon EF 300mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens



Canon 70-200mm f/2.8 IS II USM

If you want the best 70-200 L lens available - and arguably the best Canon zoom lens ever made the 70-200 f/2.8L IS II is definitely the lens to get. This is my first choice portrait lens. Some may find the 70-200mm focal length slightly long for portraits when using a APS-C body, but it works great for tight and moderately tight portraits even on these bodies.



Full frame body owners will find the 70-200mm focal length range will allow full body portraits to tight headshots. With IS, careful framing and low light shooting is easy. Event photography typically involves people in low light venues - and the 70-200 f/2.8L IS II is an ideal event lens. This is probably the second most important lens for weddings - typically very light-challenged events. Ever meet someone who couldn't smile for a camera? This focal length range is useful for capturing unsuspecting subjects - resulting in more-candid, natural shots. I have used it extensively for baby/child and even product shots. The depth of field and quality of bokeh is top notch and this is one of my go to lens for a variety of situations.

Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM

Boasting the superb build, mechanical and optical quality found in the Canon L-Series Lenses and a widely used range of focal lengths, the Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM Lens is one of the best and most popular Canon general purpose lenses made. The 24-105 L Lens quickly became one of my favorite and most-used lenses. The use for a particular focal length or focal length range varies, of course, depending on the body being used.



That said, this lens gives us a very nice general-purpose focal range to work with. On a full frame body, 24mm is very wide. On a 1.6x body, 24mm is only moderately wide (equivalent of 38.4mm). All in all, this is one of the most versatile lens with great image quality... and it is priced accordingly, especially if you buy it bundled with a DSLR body. Overall a good all use lens, its an inseparable part of my camera kit for the versatility and no nonsense quality it offers.

Tamron SP 15-30mm f/2.8 Di VC USD

The Tamron SP 15-30mm f/2.8 VC is a versatile, professional-grade lens designed for capturing extreme wide angles, when photographing architecture and landscapes with foreground elements. With its impressive optical performance and a constant aperture of f/2.8 throughout the zoom range, this lens is also a great candidate for low-light photography, such as astrophotography.



It is a unique lens not just because of its very useful focal length range with a constant aperture of f/2.8 throughout the zoom range, but because it features image stabilization – something you practically never find on ultra-wide angle lenses. The bulbous front element has a fluorine coating to repel water and grease and it has a zoom-linked double-hood design that both prevents stray light from striking the lens and minimizes potential damage from impacts. One drawback of this design is that it will not accept standard front-threaded filters, and this lens doesn't have any sort of insert-type holder for gels or alternative filtration. Other than that the results that I've gotten from this lens have always been outstanding and it is my trusted go to equipment when shooting architecture, interiors and landscapes as well. Tack sharp with minimal distortion, CA and vignetting, it's a complete value for money deal price wise to the higher priced Canon options at f/2.8.

Tripods

Manfrotto 055 Aluminium tripod

A critical piece of equipment for me now, I used to look at tripods as an obstacle to the act of shooting and composing as it involves lugging it around wherever you go, be it trekking while birding or transporting it to a studio shoot. However now having used a tripod extensively for the last 4 years it is an absolutely essential piece of kit for proper long exposures and maximum sharpness and is well worth the effort, especially when you are using a telephoto/telephoto zoom lens as camera shake is more pronounced at longer focal lengths. In bird photography especially it can make or break your image. One should always be careful when selecting a tripod to ensure it matches or exceeds the weight requirements of your gear so ensure you choose wisely.



Nest 6324C

I have just bought this carbon fibre tripod so as to be able to reduce some of the weight one carries while trekking around in the hills or jungles whilst birding. While I still have to use it extensively in the field, it seems a worthy replacement/addition to my growing list of camera equipment. It is lightweight but sturdy enough to carry a payload of 10-11 kgs and hopefully should serve my purpose well.

Lowepro Pro Runner 450 AW DSLR Trekking Backpack

It suffices my need on my travels as it allows me to carry the 300mm f2.8 IS II along with both extenders, a Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM, and the Tamron SP 15-30mm f/2.8 Di VC USD along with my laptop, rain covers, 3-4 OEM batteries and 2 chargers, a box that contains 4 CF cards a card reader and a 15 inch MacBook Pro.

Husein Latif
HUSEIN LATIF PHOTOGRAPHY



Green-tailed Sunbird (*Aethopyga nipalensis*)
By Husein Latif

Husein Latif
HUSEIN LATIF PHOTOGRAPHY



Blue-bearded Bee-eater (*Nyctyornis athertoni*)
By Husein Latif



Oriental Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)
By Husein Latif

Notable Sightings



© RK Balaji

Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

Ameenpur, Telangana

Notable Sightings



© Suman Bhattacharjee

**Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus Roseus*)
Manjeera WLS, Telangana**

Notable Sightings



© Shiva Shankar

Savanna Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*)

Anantagiri Forest, Telangana

Notable Sightings



© Manjula Desai

Nilgiri wood pigeon (*Columba elphinstoni*)

Nandi Hills, Karnataka

Notable Sightings

Srini Kolla



© Srinivas Kolla

Malabar Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus horsfieldii*)

Narsapur Forest, Telangana

Notable Sightings



© Amit Kumar

Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*)

Maguri Beel Grasslands, Assam

Notable Sightings



© Husein Latif

Rufous-necked hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*)

Latpanchar, West Bengal

Photographer's Corner



Asian Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*)
Ganeshgudi, Karnataka

© Fareed Mohamed

Photographer's Corner



Vernal Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*)
Kotagiri, Tamilnadu

© Naresh Vadrevu

Photographer's Corner



Himalayan Monal Female (*Lophophorus impejanus*)
Bhutan

© Jeet Aman

Photographer's Corner



Yellow-billed blue magpie (*Urocissa flavirostris*)
Bhutan

© Jeet Aman

Photographer's Corner



Long-tailed shrike (*Lanius schach*)
Ameenpur, Telangana

© RK Balaji

Photographer's Corner



Woolly-necked stork (*Ciconia episcopus*)
Borgaon dam, Maharashtra

© Mangeshsingh Thakur



Grey-headed bulbul *Pycnonotus priocephalus*
By Sriram Reddy